

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-07 L-03
ACDA-12 NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06
TRSE-00 DODE-00 H-01 NSC-05 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04
SIL-01 /089 W
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R 151459Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3108
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 36568

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT,MARR,GW,FR
SUBJECT: SOCIALIST VIEWS ON THE PCF, DEFENSE AND GERMANY

SUMMARY. JEAN-PIERRE COT, SOCIALIST DEPUTY FROM THE SAVOIE AND THE PARTY'S DELEGATE FOR EUROPEAN QUESTIONS, GAVE EMBASSY OFFICER A RUN-DOWN ON CURRENT PS THINKING ON SOME OF THE MORE PRESSING ISSUES BEFORE THE PARTY: THE PCF, DEFENSE AND PS/SPD DISCUSSIONS. COT HAS SLOWLY BUT SURELY BEEN ASSUMING ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PS, OFTEN INFORMALLY AND DIRECTLY FROM FIRST SECRETARY MITTERRAND. HE WILL BE THE PARTY'S RAPporteur AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN JANUARY ON DEFENSE AND WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE PS/SPD TALKS IN PARIS ALSO NEXT MONTH. COT'S VIEWS ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. PS/PCF: COT DOES NOT BELIEVE THE PCF WILL CHANGE
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ITS ANTI-PS LINE, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER THE PCF NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN JANUARY. IT HAS PICKED UP A POINT OR TWO IN RECENT POLLS, SINCE ITS PROPAGANDA MACHINE WENT INTO ACTION TWO MONTHS AGO -- PROOF IN ITS OWN MIND THAT IT MUST BE DOING SOMETHING RIGHT. A PARTY DOESN'T GIVE UP A WINNING STRATEGY, COT SURMISED. IF THE PCF CHANGED ITS TACTIC AND TRIED TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE

WITH THE PS, IT WOULD RUN THE RISK OF LOSING THESE GAINS -- AND PERHAPS EVEN MORE. IT IS TRUE, ACCORDING TO COT, THAT THE PCF IS HAVING SOME TROUBLE AT ITS BASE WHICH IS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT THE NEW NON-UNITARY LINE, BUT THE RECENT POLLS (SHOWING PCF GAINS AND PS DECLINE) SHOULD HELP CONVINCE HESITANT MILITANTS.

2. COT WAS EMPHATIC THAT THE PS STRATEGY WILL NOT CHANGE EITHER. AND, HERE TOO, THE POLLS ARE INDICATING THAT THE PS HAS DONE THE RIGHT THING, FOR THE PS IS HOLDING FAIRLY STEADY AFTER AN INITIAL DROP OF 2 POINTS. COT HAD EXPECTED THE PS TO PICK UP A LITTLE MORE FROM THE CENTER AND WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THIS POSSIBILITY HAS NOT PROVEN TRUE. BUT THREE AND-A-HALF MONTHS REMAIN FOR PROGRESS TO BE MADE HERE, HE ADDED. DOES ALL THIS MEAN A CLASH IN THE SECOND ROUND BETWEEN THE PS AND THE PCF IS INEVITABLE? COT'S GUESS WAS THAT THE PCF DECISION WILL BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST ROUND VOTE. IF THE PS LOOKS TOO STRONG, THE PCF AS A PARTY WILL BE OUT TO TOPPLE SOME OF THE PS' MORE ANTI-PCF CANDIDATES (SUCH AS COT). BUT COT FEELS THAT AFTER THE PS HAS WITHDRAWN FROM ALL THE DISTRICTS WHERE IT CAME IN SECOND IN THE PRIMARIES IN DEFERENCE TO THE PCF RIVAL, THE PCF WOULD HAVE A VERY DIFFICULT TIME IN NOT DOING THE SAME.

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3. DEFENSE: THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE PS NATIONAL CONVENTION ON DEFENSE FROM DECEMBER 10-11 TO JANUARY 7-8 WILL GIVE THE PARTY MORE BREATHING ROOM TO REFLECT ON THIS COMPLICATED QUESTION AND PERHAPS RESOLVE ITS INTERNAL DIFFERENCES. DESPITE A MEETING OF MINDS AT THE TOP OF THE PARTY ON THE RESOLUTION TO BE INTRODUCED, COT NOTED A GREATER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TOP AND THE BASE OF THE PARTY. THE RANK-AND-FILE IS STILL HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY ITS PACIFIST HERITAGE OF THE 1950'S AND 1960'S. COT'S GUESS IS THAT THE ANTI-NUCLEAR AMENDMENT WILL GET 30 PERCENT OF THE DELEGATES' VOTES, 40 PERCENT BEING HIS OUTSIDE ESTIMATE. HIS FEDERATION IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF LOCAL PACIFIST FEELINGS. THE FEDERATION VOTED BOTH THE MAIN RESOLUTION (WHICH ADVOCATES MAINTAINING THE FORCE DE FRAPPE) AND THE ANTI-NUCLEAR AMENDMENT, WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE RESOLUTION. COT FELT THE DIRECTION OF THE PS HAS MADE A MISTAKE IN NOT PRESENTING TWO RESOLUTIONS, A MOVE WHICH WOULD HAVE FORCED THE CONVENTION TO FACE THE ISSUE SQUARELY AND WHICH IN COT'S OPINION WOULD HAVE MOBILIZED A SMALLER VOTE (20 PERCENT) FOR THE ANTI-NUCLEAR PROPOSITION. NEVERTHELESS, ON THE WHOLE, COT FELT MITTERRAND HAD PLAYED THE DEFENSE QUES-

TION VERY ASTUTELY. HE HAS GIVEN THE PARTY AN IMAGE OF
OPENNESS IN AGREEING TO THE NATIONAL DEBATE, WHILE

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OTHERS WERE COUNSELING THAT THE SUBJECT WAS TOO HOT TO
HANDLE BEFORE NEXT MARCH. PERHAPS ENGAGING IN WISHFUL
THINKING, COT DID NOT FORESEE THE PCF MAKING AN ELECTION
ISSUE OUT OF THE PS' AMBIGUITY ON DEFENSE, FOR THE
REASON THAT THE PCF IS EVEN MORE PREOCCUPIED THAN THE
PS WITH ITS GRASS-ROOTS, WHICH IS HOSTILE TO THE NEW
LINE.

4. PS/SPD: THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO COME OUT OF
THE JOINT PARTY TALKS NEXT JANUARY, ACCORDING TO COT,
WILL NOT BE SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES ON
WHICH THE TWO PARTIES DIFFER BUT RATHER AN IMPRESSION
THAT THE PS AND SPD ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER --
REGULARLY AND CONTINUOUSLY. IT IS MITTERRAND, COT SAID,
WHO HAS INSISTED EVEN MORE THAN THE GERMANS THAT THESE
TALKS CONTINUE AND BE DRAWN TO THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION.
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THE LATTER POINT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO THE PS IN ORDER TO NEUTRALIZE ANTI-GERMAN PREJUDICE AMONG THE FRENCH PUBLIC, WHICH FINDS ITS WAY NOT ONLY INTO THE RPR AND PCF BUT ALSO THE PS (EVEN BEYOND THE CERES). COT NOTED A NUMBER OF AREAS WHERE THE PS AND THE SPD (USUALLY SUPPORTED BY THE US) WERE AT SERIOUS ODDS, SUCH AS NATIONALIZATIONS, PLANNING AND THE SOCIAL CONCEPT OF EUROPE. HOWEVER, AND COT'S EYES LIT UP HERE, FRANCE AND THE US WERE ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE ARGUMENT WITH RESPECT TO ACCELERATING GERMANY'S ECONOMY. REGARDING WILLY BRANDT'S VISIT TO FRANCE NEXT MONTH, COT PLAYED DOWN ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN BRANDT AND SCHMIDT; ALTHOUGH RELATIONS HAVE IN THE PAST BEEN BETTER WITH THE FORMER THAN WITH SCHMIDT, TALKS HAVE NOW EVOLVED TO A PARTY-TO-PARTY PHASE WHERE INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES MATTER LESS THAN BEFORE.

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